

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of validating a network, the method comprising:

5 receiving user input requesting a validation process;

in response to the user input, automatically discovering attributes of devices in the network;

10 automatically comparing the discovered attributes with a predefined set of valid device attributes; and generating output data that indicates whether the discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the operation of
15 generating output data comprises:

generating output data that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered attributes and a corresponding valid attribute from the predefined set of valid device attributes.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein:

the predefined set of valid device attributes
specifies valid software versions;

the operation of automatically discovering
5 attributes of the devices comprises automatically
discovering version information for software in one or
more of the devices; and

the operation of automatically comparing the
discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid
10 device attributes comprises automatically comparing the
discovered version information with the valid software
versions.

4. The method of Claim 3, wherein:

15 the software in at least one of the one or more
devices comprises firmware; and

the operation of automatically comparing the
discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid
device attributes comprises automatically determining
20 whether the firmware has a valid version.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein the operation of automatically discovering attributes of the devices comprises:

- 5 automatically identifying a device type for at least one of the devices;
- dynamically loading a validation module based on the identified device type; and
- 10 automatically using the validation module to poll the at least one device.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
15 automatically determining the valid device attributes by reference to a file that uses a markup language to encode the valid device attributes.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein:
the file with the valid device attributes comprises
an extensible markup language (XML) file; and
the operation of automatically determining the valid
20 device attributes comprises parsing the XML file by
reference to a document type definition (DTD) file,
wherein the DTD file contains definitions of data
elements for validating the network.

8. A program product for validating devices in a network, the program product comprising:

a computer-usable medium; and

computer instructions encoded in the computer-usable
5 medium, wherein, when executed, the computer instructions perform operations comprising:

receiving user input requesting a validation process;

in response to the user input, automatically

10 discovering attributes of devices in the network;
automatically comparing the discovered attributes with a predefined set of valid device attributes; and
generating output data that indicates whether the discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.

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9. The program product of Claim 8, wherein the operation of generating output data comprises:

generating output data that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered attributes and a

20 corresponding valid attribute from the predefined set of valid device attributes.

10. The program product of Claim 8, wherein:
the predefined set of valid device attributes
specifies valid software versions;

the operation of automatically discovering
5 attributes of the devices comprises automatically
discovering version information for software in one or
more of the devices; and

the operation of automatically comparing the
discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid
10 device attributes comprises automatically comparing the
discovered version information with the valid software
versions.

11. The program product of Claim 10, wherein:
15 the software in at least one of the one or more
devices comprises firmware; and

the operation of automatically comparing the
discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid
device attributes comprises automatically determining
20 whether the firmware has a valid version.

12. The program product of Claim 8, wherein the operation of automatically discovering attributes of the devices comprises:

- 5 automatically identifying a device type for at least one of the devices;
- dynamically loading a validation module based on the identified device type; and
- 10 automatically using the validation module to poll the at least one device.

13. The program product of Claim 8, wherein the computer instructions perform further operations comprising:

- 15 automatically determining the valid device attributes by reference to a file that uses a markup language to encode the valid device attributes.

14. An information handling system for validating a network configuration, the information handling system comprising:

a computer-usable medium;

5 a predefined set of valid device attributes stored in the computer-usable medium;

a network interface in communication with a network of devices; and

10 processing resources in communication with the network interface and the computer-usable medium, wherein the processing resources perform operations comprising:

receiving user input requesting a validation process;

15 in response to the user input, automatically communicating with the devices via the network interface to discover attributes of the devices;

automatically comparing the discovered attributes with the predefined set of valid device attributes; and

20 generating output data that indicates whether the discovered attributes match the valid device attributes.

15. The information handling system of Claim 14, wherein the processing resources generate output data that identifies an invalid attribute among the discovered
25 attributes and a corresponding valid attribute from the predefined set of valid device attributes.

16. The information handling system of Claim 14,
wherein:

the predefined set of valid device attributes
specifies valid software versions;

5 the processing resources automatically discover
version information for software in one or more of the
devices; and

10 the processing resources automatically compare the
discovered version information with the valid software
versions.

17. The information handling system of Claim 16,
wherein the software in at least one of the one or more
devices comprises firmware, and the processing resources
15 automatically determine whether the firmware has a valid
version.

18. The information handling system of Claim 14,
wherein:

20 the processing resources automatically identify a
device type for at least one of the devices;

the processing resources dynamically load a
validation module based on the identified device type;
and

25 the processing resources automatically use the
validation module to poll the at least one device.

19. The information handling system of Claim 14,
further comprising:

a file that uses a markup language to encode the
valid device attributes, wherein the processing resources
5 automatically determine the valid device attributes by
reference to the file with the valid device attributes.

20. The information handling system of Claim 19,
wherein:

10 the file with the valid device attributes comprises
an extensible markup language (XML) file;

the information handling system further comprises a
document type definition (DTD) file that contains
definitions of data elements for validating the network;

15 and

the processing resources automatically determine the
valid device attributes by using the DTD file to parse
the XML file.

20 21. The information handling system of Claim 14,
wherein the processing resources comprise:

one or more processors; and

software which, when executed by the one or more
processors, cause the one or more processors to perform
25 the operations of receiving user input, automatically
communicating with the devices, automatically comparing
the discovered attributes with the predefined set of
valid device attributes, and generating output data.